THE

UNCERTAINTY

OF

PHYSICK.

BEING

A TRANSLATION from the *Spaniſh* of Father *Benito Geronimo Feyjoo*, Maſter-General of the Benedictine Order, and Abbat of St. *Vincent*'s College, in *Oviedo*.

Recommended to the ſerious Peruſal of all thoſe who have a Regard for their Health, and the Prolongation of their Lives.

By *E. D.*

Quantæ putatis eſſe vos dementiæ,
Qui capita veſtra non dubitatis credere
Cui calceandos nemo commiſit pedes?

PHÆDRUS.

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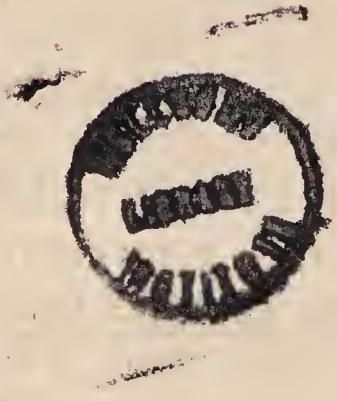

TO THE

Moſt Learned, moſt Skilful, moſt Sincere, and moſt Approved PHYSICIAN in all his Majeſty's Dominions.

I Had almoſt ſuffer'd this little Tract to have made its way into this part of the world, and ſhift for it ſelf, without any other protection than its own merit, for want of knowing a proper object to whom to recommend it, amongſt thoſe of the profeſſion it treats of. The pernicious, vulgariz'd, indeterminate phraſe of *they ſay* is what has already introduc'd, and daily goes on, uſhering more errors into the world than it's poſſible for truth to rectify to the end of it; and ſeeing there is no degree of literature, policy or mechanicks, that this boutefeu is not continually intruding it ſelf into: Happy would it be if a means could be found of baniſhing it out of ſociety, as the greateſt peſt that ever belong'd to it; being always endeavouring to lead people aſide, and ſet them together by the ears, or elſe plunge them headlong into pyrrhoniſm, the moſt dangerous of all errors. It was this miſchievous makebate that involv'd me in ſo much perplexity in the choice of a patron; for, to ſpeak the truth, I am ſo little acquainted with the gentlemen of the profeſſion of Phyſick, that had I not luckily thought of you, as a perſon free from all exceptions, I muſt have truſted almoſt wholly to *they ſay* for a determination; which I could not eaſily come into,

becauſe he is ſo notorious for ſpeaking on both ſides the queſtion. And after all, *they ſay* that you will be angry at the author's performance, and, conſequently, diſpleas'd with the tranſlator for begging your countenance of it; which I can no more believe, at preſent, than I do the *Koran*: For, as I have been well aſſur'd, you are as remarkable for candour and ingenuity as for thoſe other conſpicuous qualifications, that render you ſo ſerviceable to mankind, and an ornament to your profeſſion: Therefore I cannot imagine that truth can be diſagreeable to you, any more than it can prejudice you. It is only the ignorant pretender to what he does not, or it is not probable he ever can know, that might be expected to ſhow a reſentment to a diſcourſe, the whole force whereof is bent againſt him. It is only ſuch that have drawn their feeble weapons againſt the author in his own country; whereby they have done little elſe than diſcover their own incapacities, and given him a greater occaſion of triumph. Nothing is more certain than that the art of Phyſick is extreamly uncertain: And if that is but what is common to other arts and ſciences (tho', perhaps, not in an equal degree) why ſhould its profeſſors be afraid to acknowledge it? the learned ones, I believe, are not: And, therefore, as you are indiſputably of this claſs, permit me to entreat your patronage of an abſent author, who, I dare ſay, you will think ſtands in need of it, only as he is a foreigner. I don't doubt but a good many will be puzzled, eſpecially amongſt the vulgar, to gueſs at your perſon by the epithets I have beſtow'd on you, tho' ſo juſtly your due: And that ſeveral members of the college will be apt to apply this dedication as a compliment intended to themſelves; but I muſt beg their pardon, and I hope you will not take it amiſs, if I aſſure them that I am not certain whether you are a member of the college or not, or whether you

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have so much as ever taken up your degrees; or if so, whether *Oxford*, *Cambridge*, *Aberdeen*, *Leyden*, *Paris*, *Padua* or *Salamanca*, bestow'd this dignity upon you: For I give you my word and honour, that not one of these circumstances will either add to or diminish the weight of half a grain from the esteem I have for you: Therefore I never gave my self the trouble of being inquisitive about them. You will perceive, that, contrary to the custom of dedications, I can't be suppos'd to flatter you, having not the least inducement thereto either from hope, fear, interest, or partiality. Truth alone is my aim in this dedication, as it was the author's in all his performances; and I do not deviate from it in wishing that every physician in the kingdom was as discreet, as learned, as skilful, as sincere, and as much approv'd, as you are by universal consent. It may seem a paradox that a person of your distinguish'd character, so very much sought after in all emergencies, by people of all ranks, should yet be so obscure that noboby knows where you live: But yet this is really and truly the case, and tho' I have enquir'd at *Child*'s, at *Batson*'s, and at the *Grecian*, I find they all vary in the place of your abode; otherwise I should, as is customary on the like occasions, have waited on you to beg your acceptance of a copy. To remedy, therefore, this defect, as well as I can, I have order'd the printer to be sure to have one ready for a shilling whenever you please to send for it: Which, it's likely, you may think, the best way, because the cheapest, of being dub'd a *Mæcenas*: At least, I freely own, I should be of that opinion my self, and so crave leave to subscribe my self,

Learned SIR,

Your Most Humble Servant,

The TRANSLATOR.

THE

TRANSLATOR to the READER.

THE following diſcourſe, in the original, was calculated for the meridian of Spain, *and is a very ſmall part of a very great work, begun about fourteen years ago, and ſucceſsfully carried on to the preſent time; and, it's to be hop'd, will be continued for many years more; being a refutation of vulgar errors and opinions; which the author oppoſes with a freedom and candour becoming a man who writes for the publick good.*

I ſhall not pretend, nor is it neceſſary, to give an account of an author who is ſtill living, and who has already given ſo good a one of himſelf to the learned world, that his name cannot fail of being tranſmitted to lateſt poſterity; all I ſhall ſay, further, concerning him, at preſent (and which equally concerns my ſelf) is, that I hope he will not ſuffer by my attempting to put him into an Engliſh *dreſs: And I muſt deſire the* Reader, *if he ſhould find any thing in the following pages that ſhould give him a contrary idea of the abilities of Father* Feyjoo, *to what I have juſt now inſinuated, that he would attribute it to the imperfection of the* Tranſlator, *who was not capable of expreſſing the ſentiments of the author in that beautiful light they appear in the original. A defect, tho' common to almoſt all tranſla-*

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tions, I ſhall always readily acknowledge to ſuper-abound in this, rather than do him the injuſtice of letting his character receive the leaſt blemiſh by my endeavouring to diſguiſe it.

I am aware that ſome Zoilus, with more appearance of truth than good nature, may aſk, why, if I thought my ſelf unequal to the taſk, did I engage my ſelf in the tranſlating it, ſince nobody did or could oblige me to it? Whereto I ſhall only anſwer, that I began it, at firſt, by way of amuſement, without the leaſt deſign of making it publick: That, ſince it is finiſh'd, I am fond enough to have a tolerable good opinion of my own performance; but, nevertheleſs, I am far from being ſo conceited as to imagine that nobody was capable of doing it better: To the contrary, I aſſure my Readers, *that if there had been a likelihood of its being perform'd by any other hand, this of mine had never ſeen the light.*

And now I ſhall juſt take notice, that tho' this diſcourſe (as, indeed, all the author's works are) was particularly deſign'd for the information of the vulgar: That is to ſay, the great vulgar as well as the ſmall, I would not have our phyſicians in general imagine that they can receive no benefit or inſtruction from it: For there are very few of them but what are included in one or the other of the foregoing diſtinctions, and therefore may be ſure to find ſomething or other in it, either to inform their underſtandings, reform their errors, or regulate their practice by, if they are candid enough properly to apply the hints therein given. As for example,

If there ſhould be any practitioner, either in town or country, from the Proto *to the* Hippiatrus, *who writes books, to give the common people a high notion of his judgment and underſtanding, tho' he borrows (to uſe a polite term for a vulgar practice) all the materials, without thinking himſelf bound to make reſtitution for any of them; ſuch a one, tho' he has*

never ſo much leiſure, may aſſure himſelf that he is not qualified in Father Feyjoo's *ſenſe to commence author; and therefore is not comprehended among thoſe to whom he recommends the writing of books,* page 43, *of this diſcourſe.*

If there ſhould be another who, deſtitute of any better method of making himſelf be taken notice of, has publiſh'd a farrago of obſervations, and thereby blended his character ſo cloſe, with that of an old woman's, *that they muſt both ſtand or fall together; ſuch a one may judge the eſtimation they are like to meet with, by comparing them with what the author ſays of* Riberio, *and others of the like ſtamp.*

If there ſhould be another, whoſe nameleſs productions are as well known by the criterion of an et cetera *in every page, or, ſometimes, two or three, as by the leanneſs, confuſion, and ambiguity of his ſtyle, and who, from having accidentally read about a ſcore lines in* Quincy's Theory of Pharmacy, *at the beginning of his diſpenſatory, has taken it into his head to write a twelve-penny pamphlet, and fill it up with hints from* Leonardo da Capua, *and* Middleton's Diſſertation on the State of Phyſicians among the old *Romans; without any thing truly his own, except the wretched manner of tacking together his* excerpta; *ſuch a one may be certain, that whatever people may think of* Phyſick, *he will be thought* a jeſt.

Some parts of the diſcourſe being more peculiarly adapted to the tenets of the national religion where the author reſides, every Reader *may pick out what ſuits him, and leave the reſt to others who may think it deſerves their conſideration: For as the latter might very juſtly think it an impoſition, ſhould I preſume to interpolate any notions of my own, ſo the former would have as much reaſon to think himſelf unjuſtly dealt by, ſhould I curtail any part of his work, on any pretence whatever, without his conſent.*

THE

THE UNCERTAINTY OF PHYSICK.

THE over much confidence that the common people are apt to put in Phyſick, is both troubleſome to the phyſician, and pernicious to the patient. It is troubleſome to the phyſician; becauſe, through the hopes the patients entertain of finding, by his art, an immediate relief for every complaint, he cannot avoid multiplying the number of his viſits, which, for the generality, might as well be excus'd; and from thence proceeds the moſt grievous inconvenience of leaving very little time for ſtudy, and for making their obſervations, with mature reflection, (which is the principal part of ſtudy) none at at all. It is pernicious to the patients; becauſe, from this confidence ariſes the repetition of medicines upon medicines; the multiplicity whereof is always hurtful, and many times fatal: For it is very certain, that as the emperor *Hadrian* appointed for his ſepulchral

inſcription, *Turba medicorum perii*; ſo, to an infinite number of people, it may be more truly apply'd, with this ſmall alteration, *Turba remediorum perii*. For theſe reaſons I believe that I ſhould do both one and the other no ſmall ſervice, if I could hit upon a method to rectify the miſtakes of the vulgar in this particular.

And in order, at once, to guard againſt all equivocation, we ought, in Phyſick, to diſtinguiſh three different ſtates or degrees; that is to ſay, the ſtate of perfection, the ſtate of imperfection, and the ſtate of corruption. The ſtate of perfection in Phyſick, amounts to no more than a bare poſſibility; and a poſſibility, as I apprehend, very remote. There are little or no hopes of mens attaining to the knowledge, in the manner that's wanted, of all diſeaſes; nor of finding out ſpecifick remedies for them, unleſs it ſhould be by way of revelation: However, as yet at leaſt, we are very diſtant from that happineſs. The ſtate of imperfection, is that wherein Phyſick is, at preſent, in the knowledge and practice of the ableſt phyſicians; and the ſtate of corruption, in the ignorance and abuſe it meets with from ideots.

Phyſick, in the firſt mentioned ſtate, will be no part of my argument, becauſe there is no ſuch thing in the world; and if there were, its promiſes might deſerve the intire faith of ſuch as liſten to the doctors as ſo many oracles. I will therefore only endeavour to ſhow how fallible it is in the middle ſtate; from whence may be inferred how falſe it is in the laſt.

And firſt, to make it appear how little the poor patient can confide in the art of phyſick, it will be ſufficient to verify what we have juſt now ſaid; that is, that Phyſick, in the manner that the wiſeſt of its profeſſors are poſſeſſed of it, is yet very imperfect: But this is ready done to our hands, ſince

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they themſelves confeſs it. It would be to little purpoſe, in order to demonſtrate this truth, to quote authors of former ages; becauſe, perhaps, it would be objected, that, ſince their times, Phyſick has very much improv'd; I will therefore only cite ſome of the firſt rank amongſt the moderns.

The very learned *Michael Etmuller*, to whom no body denies the qualities of an eminent theoriſt, as well as an admirable practitioner, in ſeveral places complains of the little knowledge there is hitherto of ſimples, of the ambiguity of the indications, of the inefficacy of the medicines in practice; but ſingularly to our purpoſe in his general preface to the ſecond volume of his works, he remarks, That it is very ſeldom Phyſick removes any thing more than the ſymptoms that are produced by the morbifick matter; but that the root or eſſence of the diſtemper remains untouch'd, till ſuch time as nature it ſelf overcomes it; and this happens through the want of knowledge in the phyſician of the genuine cauſe, or of the remedies proper to be apply'd: And he adds, That this defect in the art is ſilently deplor'd by the skilful phyſicians, whilſt ignorant pretenders live extremely well ſatisfy'd of their own abilities, and think they do wonders: *Sanè frequentiſſimè in praxi occurrit, ut non niſi à poſteriori productis morboſis, ac ſymptomatis occurratur; à priori verò cauſa, ſeu ſpina intacta relinquatur: idque vel ob cauſæ genuinæ ignorantiam, vel appropriati remedii defectum: Medicis ignorantibus optimè ſe agere opinantibus; ſcientibus verò tacitè ingemiſcentibus, et ſuos defectus adhuc deplorantibus.*

The ſublime reputation that the Roman, *George Baglivius*, obtain'd amongſt thoſe of the profeſſion, is evident by his *Practical Phyſick* having run through ten impreſſions in the ſpace of thirty years, reckoning from the year 1695, that it was firſt printed at

Rome, to the year 1725. And here it is neceſſary to take notice of a miſtake in the *Antwerp* printer, who calls the late edition of the year 1725, the ninth; whereas, in reality, it is the tenth: Perhaps he did not recollect that which was printed at *Venice* in the year 1715, and was the ninth, having ſucceeded the eighth that was printed at *Paris* but a little time before. This great man, [a] after ſhewing the reaſons that hinder'd the improvement of Phyſick, ſays, That the books treating thereof, which have been hitherto wrote, give ſo ſcanty a light, that the profeſſors of moſt diſcernment, go, as it were, with their eyes hoodwink'd, without knowing who they are to believe, what doctrine they are to follow, or what courſe they are to take in the cure of diſtempers: That the practical part, as it is at preſent obſerv'd, is viciated with a thouſand axioms either falſe or uſeleſs; and, in ſhort, that the art of Phyſick, very far from having grown to a proportionable ſtature, ought to be look'd upon as yet in ſwadling-clothes, or in the cradle. *Ideò nemini mirum videri debet, quod libri medici per id temporis duplicis juris facti, et uberrimè conſcripti, nihil aliud revera ſapiant, quàm puram, et abſtractam philoſophiam: naturæ interim judicia fracta jaceant, et depreſſa: ipſaque praxeos principia tantopere turbata ſint, ut inter peritiſſimos hodie non facile conſtet, quid tenendum, cui credendum, qua demum via progrediendum ſit in abſolvendis morborum curationibus. Si conſideremus igitur praxeos medicæ ſtatum, eundem profectò commotum, ac prorſus turbatum per inania axiomata, et falſas quaſdam generalitates, aut à ſectis medicorum diverſis, aut a præpoſteris legibus methodorum, aut ab idolis quibuſdam et præjudiciis cuilibet medico familiaribus, productas obſervabimus. Si ætatem verò*

[a] Lib. I. *Prax. Medic.* cap. 10. num. 4.

illius,

illius, illam in ipsis adhuc pueritiæ finibus contineri.

Thomas Sydenham, who is acknowledged throughout *Europe*, for the most celebrated practitioner of the last age, after a prolix study in books, after observing, with the most vigilant attention for many years, the steps of nature in diseases, speaks yet with more uncertainty and perplexity than all the rest. One scarce reads a precept of his, wherein it is not visible, that he wrote it with a trembling hand: He frequently proposes his doubts, and declares his ignorance with a noble sincerity; a qualification that beautifies his writings even more than the purity of the *Latin* which shines bright through every part of them. He shows a very limitted confidence in his own proper experience, but scarce any at all in the doctrines of authors: Of these, he says, that they easily propose a cure for many diseases, which they themselves, nor no body else, to this day, could ever remedy: *Morborum curationes pro more facillimè proponuntur; atque hoc ita præstare, ut verba in facta transeat, atque eventus promissis respondeant, magis ardui moliminis illi judicabunt, qui vident haberi apud scriptores practicos morbos complures, quos nec illi ipsi scriptores, nec quisquam hactenus medicorum sanare valuerunt* [b]. A grievous fault certainly in authors, ostentatiously to impose remedies on the publick, which they themselves have experienced useless, or, perhaps, not at all, and expose the poor physicians, who follow their works, in their prescriptions and prognosticks, to remain deluded, after having wasted, with various medicines, the means, as well as the constitutions, of their patients.

The same *Sydenham*, in another place, confesses of himself, That when, after a great deal of appli-

[b] In *Præfatione*.

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cation and continual obſervation, he imagined he had attained a ſure method of curing all ſorts of fevers; he learn'd that he had only open'd his eyes to fill them with duſt: Thus confus'd and perplex'd he found himſelf after ſo much ſtudy: *Statim didici me ideò tantum aperuiſſe oculos, ut pulvere, haud quaquam verè olympico, iidem complerentur*[c].

Some years after, the abovemention'd authors (and it was in the year 1714.) Monſieur *Le Francois*, a phyſician and *Pariſian* doctor, ſet forth his critical obſervations on Phyſick, wherein he deplores, no leſs than the foregoing, the very ſhort progreſs of this art: And ſpeaking of the writers thereon, the following words are very remarkable, which I have faithfully tranſlated from the *French* language. The difficulty there is to make obſervations with all that care and exactitude which is requiſite, the multitude of diſeaſes almoſt all differing from each other in the eſſential circumſtances, the little regard that is always paid by the publick to ſuch phyſicians who regulate their practice by obſervation, and, on the contrary, the eſtimation that is acquired by the inventors of ſyſtems, and ſuch as follow them; all this together is the cauſe that, amongſt ſuch a number of phyſical treatiſes, wherewith we are oppreſt, there are very few to be found that are of real uſe; and, it may even be affirm'd, that there is not one wherein an intire confidence can be repos'd.

If this is the caſe, phyſicians, in the exerciſe of their art, muſt go as though it were blindfold: For, beſides the difficulty to diſtinguiſh the few uſeful books from ſo many uſeleſs ones, in order to ſtudy the former, and abandon the latter (which a great many have not capacity to do; eſpecially there being as great a variety of opinions on this point, as

[c] In *Epiſt. Dedic.*

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on all the reſt; for ſome extol the practice of one author, ſome another) there yet remains behind the extremely arduous taſk, to know when, and in what manner, to confide in the doctrine of thoſe few uſeful treatiſes, and when not; it being premiſed that they are not to be entirely depended upon.

The ſame author publiſh'd, in the year 1716, a project for the reforming of Phyſick, wherein he ſhews, at large, the great imperfection wherewith the world is poſſeſs'd of this art at that day; and propounding the cauſes, he counts among others the uſeleſsneſs of phyſical books with yet ſtronger expreſſions than the foregoing; for he ſays thus, *The treatiſes which have been wrote, touching this art, are full of obſcurity, of uncertainties, and of falſities.* And I will not omit what he had before aſſerted of the preſent ſtate of Phyſick in *France*; for it conduces greatly to undeceive the publick. *Altho'* (ſays he) *there is no country where there is not a neceſſity of making new eſtabliſhments for the bringing of Phyſick to perfection, ſuch a reformation is more neceſſary in* France *than in other places: For there is not in any country ſo much diſorder in the practice of Phyſick as in* France. Now who can forbear laughing, when he reads this, at the ſimplicity of my countrymen, who, when they happen to have a *French* phyſician amongſt them, that in his own country is but of a very midling reputation, imagine they have got a perſon capable of recalling ſouls from the other world?

The moſt ingenious *Spaniard*, Dr. *Martin Martinez*, very lately, in his two volumes of *Sceptical Phyſick*, has very learnedly diſcover'd to the world the uncertainty of this art: Wherein oppoſing many maxims ſtrongly eſtabliſh'd amongſt its profeſſors; if his arguments are not always concluſive enough to convince their being falſe, they are, at leaſt, ſo to

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leave them in the degree of doubtful, and ſometimes dangerous.

In fine, it is a thing as common among the phyſicians of the greateſt ſtudy and abilities, to acknowledge the weakneſs of their art in ſubduing diſeaſes, as it is for ignorant pretenders to boaſt of the certainty they have in it, of triumphing over thoſe enemies. Inſomuch, that it may be deem'd a caracteriſtical mark to diſtinguiſh the knowing from the ignorant: Which *Etmuller* has very aptly expreſs'd in the words cited above: *Medicis ignorantibus optimè ſe agere opinantibus; ſcientibus vero tacitè ingemiſcentibus, & ſuos defectus adhuc deplorantibus.* And long before that, the reconciler, in his definition of an unſkilful phyſician, lays down the inſeparable quality of being a conſtant diſavower of his own ignorance: *Propriæ ignorantiæ conſtantiſſimus inconfeſſor.*

Now let the common people (who are apt, in an ordinary phyſician, to contemplate the deity of *Apollo*, and in the moſt uſeleſs mixture of an apothecary's ſhop, the reputed virtue of *aurum potabile*) conſider what confidence they can have of a faculty, whereof thoſe who have been the greateſt ſtudents and adepts in it are ſo diffident? If in the eſtabliſh'd canons of the beſt authors there is ſo much uncertainty, with what ſecurity can a phyſician promiſe them health, who, at beſt, has done no more than thoroughly ſtudy thoſe very canons? If the famous profeſſors find themſelves at a loſs what method they ought to take in the cure of our diſeaſes, what right judgment can be hop'd for from the common phyſicians? If the giants of the profeſſion find themſelves without ſufficient ſtrength to combat theſe great enemies of our lives, what can be expected from the pygmies?

And after all, what would it avail if phyſical authors ſhould not be ſo candid with us, in regard to the

the uncertainty of their art, if their perpetual contradictions clearly proclaim it? Every thing in phyſick is diſputed; therefore every thing therein is doubtful. The continual wrangling of phyſicians is, perhaps, what gave a foundation to *Pedro de Apono* to ſay, that phyſick was not dedicated to *Apollo*, but to *Mars*; altho' *Cornelius Agrippa*, according to his wonted genius, gives it a more malign interpretation. [d] Their dogmas are, and ever have been, more oppoſite than the qualities of the four humours they diſtinguiſh in human bodies. This misfortune has continually attended Phyſick from its firſt conception: For they pretend or feign *Chiron*, the centaur, maſter of *Eſculapius*, to have been its firſt parent; in whom the occurrence of two natures may be conſider'd as a conſtellation; by the influence whereof Phyſick, from its birth, has abounded with ſuch an oppoſition of doctrines. It was afterwards brought up for ſome time like a foundling brat; for there was no other rule of curing diſtempers than by expoſing the patients in the market-places and publick ſtreets, to the end that the paſſers-by might preſcribe them remedies; wherein there muſt needs have been an infinite diverſity of judgments; till at laſt *Hippocrates* undertook to provide for, and ſuckle it in the little iſland of *Cos*: Where the perpetual repercuſſion of the waves ſeem'd to be a new preſage of the boundleſs ſtrife of opinions that has proceeded from it ever ſince.

The next in fame to *Hippocrates*, and not very diſtant in time, were *Praxagoras* and *Diocles Cariſtius*, who made ſome alterations in the prudent old man's doctrines; reducing, firſt, all kinds of diſeaſes to a diſorder of the fluids, and extending the power of the ſeptenary number to climateriqûe years; whereas *Hippocrates* had only given it the

[d] Lib. *de Vanit. Scient.* cap. 83.

juriſdiction of critical days. *Herophilus* ſucceeded them, reducing all Phyſick to argument and diſputation, turning it aſide from experience and practice; which was the worſt ſcheme of all, it being equally the ſame as to ſeparate art from nature. Afterwards came *Chryſippus*, turning topſy turvy every thing that his predeceſſors had ſaid: And his diſciple *Eraſiſtratus*, grandſon of *Ariſtotle*, was not much more faithful to him, varying conſiderably from what *Chryſippus* had taught: Notwithſtanding both maſter and diſciple agreed to baniſh bleeding and purging out of Phyſick.

They nevertheleſs retain'd ſome remains of the ancient pharmacy, till *Aſclepiades*, in the time of *Pompey the Great*, threw entirely down to the ground the whole *Hippocratical* doctrine, calling it, in deriſion, the meditation upon death; placing only in the claſs of remedies ſuch things as would give eaſe, and exhilerate the ſpirits of the patient. This flattering of the palate, together with an accident of having obſerv'd ſigns of life in a man that was carrying to be buried, whom he eaſily recover'd, and the people imagined he had rais'd from the dead; conſpired to make him maſter of the world within the ſphere of his own faculty; and what further contributed thereto, was his having publickly challeng'd the fates (if I may ſo ſay) by his conſtantly declaring that he ſhould never be ſick, as in reality he never was, not even when he died: For he finiſh'd his long carrear of life by a ſtumble and fall down a pair of ſtairs. *Themiſon*, the diſciple of *Aſclepiades*, as ſoon as his maſter was dead, alter'd his whole doctrine, and made himſelf leader of the ſect of the *Methodiſts*, who do not ſeem to have gain'd any great applauſe at *Rome*, when *Juvenal* ſpeaking of the *Sectaries*, under the denomination of their chief, ſings

Quot Themiſon *ægros autumno occiderit uno.*

Soon

Soon after flouriſh'd *Atheneus*, who attributed all diſeaſes to the emanation of certain ſpirits let looſe, as well from mixt bodies as from the elements. After him appear'd *Archigenes*, founder of the *Eclectique* ſect, whoſe eſſential point was to gather together all they could find good in the other ſects. He was ſo ſuperſtitious an obſerver of the rules of his art, that he proteſted he would never abandon one of them, tho' the deſtruction of a city were to be the conſequence of his obſervation of it.

Let us paſs over the elegant *Cornelius Celſus* (who does not ſhew in his works an adherence to any ſect, and only obſerve that after the example of *Aſclepiades*, he laugh'd at the obſervation of critical days by odd numbers which *Hippocrates* had eſtabliſh'd) to arrive at *Galen*: A man, doubtleſs, of a vaſt comprehenſion and refin'd ingenuity, capable of repoſſeſſing the world with the ſyſtem of *Hippocrates*, if that had been his aim, and not rather to introduce one of his own, under the ſpecious pretence of commenting upon, and defending the *Hippocratical*; which he ſucceeded in with ſuch an unaccountable felicity, that in many ages there was not one to contradict him: For in the decline of the *Roman* empire, by the irruptions of the barbarous nations, the culture of arts and ſciences was extinguiſh'd; and the few phyſicians, that apply'd themſelves to write, did no more than copy the antients. On the other hand, the *Arabians* (who took the advantage of this ſupineneſs in *Europe* to make themſelves ſole maſters of philoſophy and phyſick) were followers of *Galen*: The principal of them, and amongſt others, *Rhaſis*, *Averroes*, *Alquindus*, and *Avicena*, contenting themſelves with annexing ſome ſuperfluous diſcourſes, and uſeleſs ſubtilties.

In this manner the dominion of *Galen* preſerv'd it ſelf for a long time: A truly tyrannical one, by reaſon of the vaſt quantity of blood that this grand

patron of the lancet occaſion'd to be ſhed from the whole race of mankind: Till about the beginning of the 16th century of our reſtauration, *Paracelſus* reviving the very ancient hermetic philoſophy, fell upon *Hippocrates*, and upon *Galen*, with ſuch ſtrange fury, that he left them neither beginning nor end in life: And by favour of ſome portentuous cures (perhaps never perform'd, for I don't know that we have any further teſtimony of them than what his diſciple, *Oporinus*, has left us) of diſtempers, eſteem'd incurable, he gain'd a ſufficient number of followers: Nevertheleſs he died in the 48th year of his age, falſifying in himſelf the repeated boaſts he had made, that he could, by the ſuperior efficacy of his remedies, prolong a man's life to many ages. Amongſt the followers of *Paracelſus*, *Helmoncius* (of whom likewiſe prodigious cures are reported) added to the whims of the former, his dream of the Archæus, or ſoul of the world, a ſort of fairy ſpirit, that is to be found in every thing, and by which every thing is put in motion.

After this aroſe the ſchool of chymiſtry, or ſecond hermetical ſect (as ſome call it) which being founded on experiments, adminiſter'd by the force of fire, acknowledges no other principles, as well for the conſtitution of eſſential beings, as for health and diſeaſes, than ſalt, ſulphur, and mercury. From this ſchool ſprung *Takenius*, promoting a new faction, or ſtrengthening that which was, in ſome meaſure, already promoted of acids and alkali's; which, according to his plan, ſeem to be the whigs and tories of humane nature. This party prov'd fortunate, and depriv'd *Galen* of entire provinces; altho' without declaring againſt *Hippocrates*, who they rather pretended to have for their patron.

In the mean time as anatomy began to be cultivated, *Sylvius Willis*, and others, on their own obſervations, conceiv'd particular deſigns equally oppoſite

poſite to chymical and galenical; ſo, on the other hand, *Santorius* produc'd the plauſible ſyſtem of mathematical Phyſick, wherein, according to the rules of ſtaticks and mechanicks, is conſider'd the alternate force of the ſolids and fluids of a humane body: And the whole care of a phyſician ought to conſiſt like that of *Catherine de Medicis* in *France*, to preſerve the æquilibrium of the two oppoſite parties, ſetting himſelf ſometimes on one ſide, ſometimes on the other; for which ſoever of the two parties ſhould gain an apparent advantage, it would threaten deſtruction to this animated republick.

Thus they proceeded, varying ſyſtems, and deſtroying one the other, when either the faſtidity of ſo many, or the uncertainty of them all, occaſion'd the phyſicians, of more diſcretion, to purſue another method, and that was, to ſeek nature by her own foot-ſteps, confiding in experience alone. It's true, that after the great *Bacon* of *Verulam* had open'd the eyes of both phyſicians and philoſophers, giving them plainly to underſtand, it was only by this path that they could be able to make any proficiency in the two faculties, there were not wanting ſome prudent phyſicians that gave a glance or two towards experience, and for that end collected together a few obſervations, although for the moſt part defective, as we ſhall obſerve hereafter. In effect, the phyſicians of the brighteſt genius's, this day, in all *Europe*, are of this faction: But with this reſtriction, that the major part of them, altho' entirely divorc'd from *Galen*, continue nevertheleſs to fight very faithfully under the banner of *Hippocrates*, whoſe doctrine, they ſay, they always find in conſtant alliance with their own proper experience.

Baglivius, altho' a great promoter of obſervations, and a declar'd enemy to ſyſtems, and yet enamour'd of the new one of ſtatical Phyſick, could

not

not reſolve to abandon it: Like a vicious man who doats on ſome one particular woman, with a reprehenſible tenderneſs, at the ſame time that he ſpeaks ill in general of the whole ſex. But, in reality, this ſyſtem is not poſſeſs'd of greater immunities than the others, excepting (as it was ſo lately come into the world) that of pretty infants, in whom, when they begin to prattle, every thing they ſay ſeems witty. In effect, *Baglivius* endeavouring to harmonize three voices, that's to ſay that of *Hippocrates*, that of his favourite ſyſtem, and that of obſervation, would fain have eſtabliſh'd the abſolute government of practical Phyſick in this triumvirate. And ſo far as reconciling *Hippocrates* with experience he is well attended to by moſt of the phyſicians of the preſent times: The reputation of that very diſcreet ancient being at this day highly eſtabliſh'd. Notwithſtanding others more circumſpect pretend that theſe ſame aphoriſms of *Hippocrates* require to be carefully examin'd into by the light of obſervation; and there are not wanting here and there one who diſconfide entirely in his doctrine: For example, *Michael Luis Synopius*, a *Hungarian* phyſician, who a few years ago printed a treatiſe, intitled, *De vanitate, falſitate & incertitudine Aphoriſmorum Hippocratis.*

We omit ſome things in this hiſtorical abridgment of Phyſick (ſuch as the diviſion of it into three kinds, *viz.* empirical, methodical and rational, as likewiſe the progenitors or protectors of each of theſe kinds at different times) that we may not make this eſſay too prolix: And becauſe ſo many contradictions, as we have already taken notice of, are ſufficient to ſhew the uncertainty of Phyſick.

And, at laſt, after ſo many debates, are phyſicians then agreed? nothing leſs. They are more now than ever at variance: For they have gone augmenting

menting altercations as fast as they multiply'd books. The professors are, at present, divided into *Hippocratical*, *Galenical*, chymical, and pure experimental: For as for the *Paracelsists* and *Helmontians*, they are almost wholly at an end. And according to this difference of classes they follow different methods of cure. For to say (as some pretend) that physicians, who follow a different system, agree nevertheless in the practical part, is a manifest deceit. Refer to *Etmuller* [c], where he says: *Prout hypotheses medicorum, seu judicia variant, etiam variat medendi methodus: alia nempe est* Galenica, Paracelsica, Poteriana, *&c.* In the writings of those that follow different systems, it's very observable the great contrariety there is in the practical precepts; and there is no occasion for a greater proof than to dip into *John Doleus*; where it will be seen, that after giving his judgment of each distemper, according to distinct systems, he propounds a different method of cure, adapted to each system.

Not only the physicians, who follow different systems, oppose one another in their method of cure, but even those that follow one and the same: As is apparent in *Spain*, where almost all the physicians are *Galenists*; and 'tis very rare that two or three, if they are consulted separately, agree in the method of cure. From whence it may be naturally inferred, that the conformity they shew after they have met and consulted together, does not flow so much from judgment as from policy. And it does not stop yet here; for this opposition is not only observable amongst the followers of the same system, but even among those who are entirely govern'd by the same author. The practice of *Lazarus Riberio*, is the absolute standard of our

[c] *Instit. Medic.* part iii. cap. 2.

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common phyſicians ; who, if ever they read other authors, make uſe of them not to cure, but to harangue by ; and, after all, they are very frequently diſcordant, as is apparent to all the world: For if a patient conſults one phyſician, he ſays one thing; and if another, he ſays otherwiſe. One has his eyes fix'd upon one precept of *Riberio*, another on another ; and even one and the ſame, they conſtrue in a different manner ; as I my ſelf have ſeen more than once. This phyſician declares the diſeaſe a Plethory, and orders bleeding ; that a Cacochymia, and preſcribes a purge ; and if a third comes in, he uſually finds an oppoſite indication from the inefficacy of both one remedy and the other.

In ſo great a diſagreement amongſt phyſicians, firſt from the oppoſition of authors, then from the divers manners of underſtanding them, and again, from the different obſervations and judgments of the indications, What is the poor patient to do ? Why, he muſt call in, if he has choice, the moſt able phyſician ; but, many times, one does not know which that is. Common applauſe is frequently deceitful ; for artifice and policy generally have a greater ſhare in it than real knowledge. A meer caſualty procures a name and reputation to an *Ignoramus* ; and one ſingle miſchance diſauthoriſes a man of learning : As it happen'd to *Andrew Veſalius*, who taking for dead a *Spaniſh* gentleman that he himſelf had attended during his illneſs, order'd the body to be open'd ; but no ſooner had the inciſion knife enter'd his breaſt, than there appear'd manifeſt ſigns of life ; ſo that the unhappy man died of the wound, and not of the diſtemper. But admit, and welcome, that he luckily hits upon the ableſt of the profeſſion, he is never the more ſecure for that. *John Argenterio* was look'd upon as a prodigy of knowledge ; and almoſt all the patients that fell

under his hands either died, or were precipitated into worſe diſeaſes; ſo that, at laſt, no body made uſe of him.

Let a phyſician be as learned as he will, his judgment, in reſpect to cure, will always be precarious, inaſmuch as other phyſicians, of very great learning, are againſt him: All of them alledge reaſons and experience. What *Ariadne* will aſſiſt either the phyſician or the patient with the clue, in order to get out of this labyrinth? There is ſcarcely one maxim relating to cure, that is not controverted; beginning with the famous principle, *Contraria contrariis curanda ſunt* [f]. And, without doubt, this principle generally taken, is either falſe or uſeleſs: It's uſeleſs, if, by contrariety on the part of the medicine is underſtood (as ſome do underſtand it) the expulſive vertue of the morbifick matter; for in this ſenſe it is only one of thoſe truths that carry their own demonſtration with them, and that every body knows without being told; and the axiom means no more, than that the morbifick matter muſt be expelled by what is able to expel it. The principle is falſe if it is underſtood of the contrariety of the perceptible qualities; for neither are all contraries of this kind remedies; nor are there wanting an infinite number of remedies that are not contraries of this kind. The firſt is plain, in that all ſorts of fevers are not cured by cold things; for there are many kinds wherein they would be very prejudicial; in theſe the fever heat, which becomes languid, ought rather to be augmented, in order to forward the fermentation, and aſſiſt nature in the conflict, wherein, at ſuch a time, ſhe is engaged,

[f] *Hippoc. Legum Medicin.* cap. 1. lex. 3. Curatio morbi, contrariis opus ſuum perficito: calida refrigerando, humida ſiccando, dura emolliendo, craſſa extenuando, lenta incidendo ac detergendo; lævia exaſperando, anguſta dilatando, denſa rarefaciendo, inanita replendo: et ſic de reliquis per contrarium.

to throw off, by this means, what incommodes her. The ſecond is viſible in all ſpecificks, wherein one does not perceive any contrariety of manifeſt qualities with thoſe of the diſtemper they are given for. And if they would underſtand this axiom as meaning a contrariety in occult qualities, or as others explain it oppoſition, *à tota ſubſtantia*, it is likewiſe uſeleſs: For ſuch an oppoſition is not diſcoverable by philoſophy, but by experience; and whenever I find, by experience, that ſuch and ſuch remedies are oppoſite to ſuch and ſuch diſeaſes, I have no need of the axiom to tell me ſo. But it may be ſaid, that even in this laſt ſenſe, the axiom is falſe; for there are medicinces that operate not by way of oppoſition, but rather by way of agreement and friendſhip: As for example, all abſorbents, which imbibe the morbifick matter into themſelves, by the conformity of their pores with the figure of the particles that compoſe ſuch matter.

But to have done with this principle (whereof even the phyſicians that revere it, make no uſe in their practice; but rather, on the contrary, by their practice, govern themſelves for the application of the principle; pretending to diſcover, after experience has ſhewn them the remedy, the oppoſite qualities they have a mind to, both in the remedy and the morbifick matter) let us come now to particulariſe the doubts that occur in the two great remedies moſt common and in uſe, in order to ſhew the little or no ſecurity that can be had from them.

The firſt that offers it ſelf to our conſideration, is Phlebotomy, or blood letting; a remedy which, if we believe *Pliny* and *Solinus*, men learn'd from the Hippopotamus, an amphibious animal, who, when it perceives it ſelf heavy and dull, moves it ſelf upon the ſharp points of the broken reeds, and fetches

fetches blood from its feet and legs, and afterwards closes the orifices with mud: Though, by the way, it does not appear clearly from *Gesner*, what kind of an animal this is, or whether there is, or ever was, such an one in the world.

Hippocrates was the first that authorized letting of blood. Afterwards *Galen* placed it in greater credit, giving a much larger extent to its use; and all the physicians that succeeded, unanimously follow'd *Galen*, until *Paracelsus*, whose opposition did not prevent it from reigning afterwards: And, indeed, this is a reigning remedy still, although with a great deal of diversity in regard to its use. It has nevertheless met with powerful oppugners, who generally, and almost without exception, disapprov'd of it. Amongst the ancients may be accounted *Chrysippus*, *Aristogenes*, *Erasistratus*, and *Strato*, and, not to mention others, I believe *Asclepiades* ought to be reckon'd. Of the approximate ages, *Paracelsus*, *Van Helmont*, *Peter Severinus*, *Crolius*, *Quercetan*, *Potter*, *Faber*, *Crusius*, *Tozzi*, and a great many other famous men.

Now, according to common rules, it cannot be denied, but that so many and so great men, render an opinion probable; and as these not only condemned letting blood as unprofitable, but likewise hurtful, there follows a probability, that letting of blood is always prejudicial: so that this risque is sure to attend every one that is let blood. And although it may be said, that such an opinion weighs but little in respect to the much greater probability there is in its opposite, it does not at all make against me: *First*, Because *Multa falsa sunt probabiliora veris*: *Secondly*, Because that, notwithstanding the risque of letting blood, as founded on this scanty probability, seems hitherto but little, we shall proceed to make it so bulky, that in practice it will shoot up to a more than midling stature. But

what has been already ſaid, conduces to the ſame intent; for the more articles there are which concur to give a foundation to the doubt, ſo much more the riſque increaſes in proportion.

But if it ſhould be objected to me, that this opinion is not at all probable, becauſe it is contrary to experience, which conſtantly ſhews, that bleeding, in many caſes, is very ſalutary and beneficial. *Hippocrates* is ready to appear in my defence, with his ſentence, *Experimentum fallax*. In reality, except in a very few ailments, where experience ſeems to have declared in favour of bleeding (and even theſe, perhaps, might be cur'd better by another method) in all the reſt it is very doubtful. The authors that controverted the letting of blood, were not ignorant of thoſe experiments; and therefore they cannot have been very clear ones, ſince it did not bring them over to the common opinion: ſuch as by blindly or implicitly following of *Galen*, preſcribe bleeding in all putrid fevers, likewiſe defend their practice by alledging experience to be on their ſide; and, notwithſtanding that, an infinite number look upon it as a piece of brutality; and doctor *Martinez* ſays, That this maxim has kill'd more people than the train of artillery.

The foundation which depends on experience, if this experience is not very conſtant and very remarkable, is ſufficiently weak; becauſe every one alledges it in his own favour. And this proceeds from that, in whatever manner a phyſician treats his patients, provided he does not give them poiſon, ſome live, and others die; he that is a friend to the remedy that has been apply'd, attributes the recovery to the remedy, if the patient lives; and if he dies, lays the blame on the inſuperable violence of the diſtemper. He that is no friend to the remedy, attributes thereto the death of the patient, if he dies, and to the extraordinary ſtrength of nature,

ture, if he recovers. By this means, many times, the phyſician is unjuſtly reproach'd for the death of one patient, and as often applauded without any manner of reaſon, for the recovery of another. The truth is, that it frequently happens, a ſick perſon will live, and will gradually recover his health, not only although the phyſician orders him to be let blood unſeaſonably; but would do the ſame were he to give him a ſtab with a poinard; becauſe his conſtitution is able to bear any thing. The Ephemerides of the Leopold academy, gives an account of a nun that recover'd from a Quotidian Ague, by having had near an hundred and twenty ounces of blood taken out of her veins within the ſpace of two months. I ſhould be glad to know of maſter *Valliſnier* (it being he that participated this tranſaction to the academy, on purpoſe to encourage the practice of bleeding in thoſe of his profeſſion) what angel it was revealed to him that this nun would not have recovered, and, perhaps, much ſooner, if ſhe had not had ſo much blood taken from her? Beſides, we are yet to know in what condition her conſtitution remained after ſuch a boiſterous re-encounter; for it is a thing not at all to be doubted, that ſome ſick people who eſcape death, in ſpite of the violent procedure of the phyſician, continue afterwards with poor feeble conſtitutions, capable only of ſpinning out a ſhort, lingering life in anguiſh and miſery (the doctor triumphing all the while, as if he had really done ſomething elſe than retard the cure, and ruin the patient's conſtitution) who, if they had truſted more to nature, or had treated her in a milder manner, might not only have regained their health, but likewiſe have enjoy'd it longer, with greater robuſticity. The ſame *Valliſnier* relates another event of a man, from whom he took away almoſt all the blood he had in his veins; which

which was very acrid, and kept ſucceſſively ſupplying what he took away, with other blood of a healthier nature. I ſhall refer the truth of this tranſaction to the conſideration of the learned phyſicians: In the interim, let the prudent ones tell me whether it would be right to govern ones ſelf by ſuch an example. The real truth is, that ſuch outragious, bold practitioners take care to lay before the world the caſe of one or two ſick perſons, whoſe extraordinary ſtrength of conſtitutions could endure to ſtruggle with the violence of the diſtemper, and with the fury of the doctor at the ſame time; but they draw a curtain over an infinite number of others that periſh under their hands: So fallacious as this comes to, are very many of the experimental obſervations which are to be found in phyſical writers, and whereby phyſicians would authorize their practice. From whence I infer, that as experiments are ſo very fallible, experience does not ſeem to be ſufficient to protect the practice of bleeding ſo ſtrongly, as to render at all improbable the opinion of thoſe who abſolutely condemn it.

But now I will agree, that the common received opinion may be true, that in ſeveral caſes bleeding is proper; and I believe it to be ſo. Still the difficulty remains behind of the *Quando*, and the *Quantum*: As for the latter, there can be no ſuch thing as a fixed rule; becauſe it depends upon the magnitude of the indication, and the ſtrength of the patient; both which, one phyſician may judge greater, and another leſſer. And as for the former, that is to ſay, the *Quando*, there are ſo many opinions, and thoſe ſo oppoſite, that they can do no leſs than occaſion the higheſt confuſion and doubt in the phyſician, as well as a manifeſt danger, if he ſhould miſtake. He reads in ſome authors, that, in ſuch and ſuch diſtempers, attended with

ſuch

ſuch and ſuch circumſtances, bleeding is exceedingly convenient and neceſſary: In others he reads, that in the ſame diſtempers and circumſtances it is pernicious; and in both he finds reaſons propounded, as well as experience alledg'd, for their different opinions. Which ſide is he to take? The ſick perſon, for the generality, makes no ſcruple of paying an implicit obedience to the phyſician; for, on hearing him pronounce with a ſort of confidence, he imagines that there is not the leaſt diſpute but what he orders muſt be right: Though, at the ſame time that the doctor is paſſing the ſanguinary ſentence upon him, if he ſhould liſten to twenty or thirty grave and experienced authors that, from his underſtanding, are calling out to him, *Hold your hand, don't bleed him; for if you do you deſtroy him*; though others are not wanting, at the ſame time, to encourage him to proceed; What would the patient think? Oh! ſays he, the doctor has weighed the probability of both one opinion and the other. But from whence does it appear that he weighs it as he ought; ſince there are infinite others that weigh it after another manner?

The common *Galeniſts*, in truth I do not know when it is that they hit right in bleeding; but I know that they very frequently err; for they hold a putrid fever as a general indication of the neceſſity of bleeding: Whereas it is evident (as may be learn'd from the beſt authors, and reaſon it ſelf clearly dictates to us) that on very many occaſions bleeding is hurtful: Foraſmuch as it diſturbs, ſuſpends, or retards the work of fermentation, which, when it is remiſs, rather ought to be promoted, to the end that nature may attain to a deſpumation; which is what ſhe endeavours at, by means of fermentation. A fever is an inſtrument which nature makes uſe of to exterminate what incommodes it, according to that incomparable practitioner in feveriſh diſorders,

ders, *Sydenham*, and with him the moſt knowing phyſicians of the preſent age: *Cum et febris naturæ inſtrumentum fuerit ad hujus ſecretionis opus debita opera fabricatum*[g]. And a little lower: *Febris naturæ eſt machina ad diffianda ea, quæ ſanguinem male habent*. *Lucas Tozzi* obſerv'd, That thoſe diſtempers where a fever was not raiſed, are of a great deal the longer duration. And all the world knows the power of fevers, to reſolve catarrhs, convulſions, fits of the gout, and other different affections; for which reaſon, many years ago, *Celſus*, and before him, *Hippocrates*, recommended a feveriſh heat as profitable in ſeveral diſorders. Notwithſtanding all this, the generality of phyſicians always contemplate it as a capital enemy, againſt whom they ought immediately to proceed with bleeding and purging; which is as much as to ſay, with fire and ſword. As for me, I ſay with *Etmuller*, who, after relating the obſervations of certain authors, that on examining the bodies of ſome perſons who died of fevers, found the blood intirely conſumed by the heat of the diſtemper; from whence he infers how vilely the lancet is employ'd in diminiſhing it, concludes thus: *Itaque ego cum ejuſmodi lanionibus et ſanguiſugis non facio, qui vitæ theſaurum tam inutiliter abliguriunt*.

And I ſhall not omit to take notice here, that the ſigns which the phyſicians obſerve from the blood it ſelf, to know its goodneſs or malignity by, are very fallacious: *Firſt*, Becauſe it ſenſibly alters immediately, as it proceeds from the veſſels: *Secondly*, Becauſe the blood of every individual is different one from another; and that which appears to the phyſician to be bad, is ſo very expedient to the conſtitution it was taken from, that it cannot live without it; which was the reaſon that the invention of tranſ-

[g] Folio 100.

fuſing

fuſing the blood of a ſound perſon into the veins of a ſick one, ſucceeded ſo ill. This is the opinion of *Etmuller*[h]: *Judicium quod attinet de ſanguine vena ſecta emiſſo, hoc non immeritò rejicit* Helmontius, *cum unuſquiſque homo peculiarem ſuum habeat ſanguinem, et in ſanitatis latitudine maximâ ſanguinis ſit varietas. Laſtly*, In ſhort, becauſe the various colour of the blood commonly ariſes from very different principles to what the phyſicians attribute it. The celebrated anatomiſt, *Philip Venheyen*, obſerved, That Spirit of Vitriol mix'd with blood, turns it black; therefore the blackneſs of the blood is no certain ſign of aduſtion. The ſame perſon likewiſe experienced, that Alkalis give it a greater redneſs. In fine, any one that knows that only two drops of a rubicund liquor, as is the Lac Virginale, will turn a diſh full of water the colour of milk, will make no account of what the ordinary philoſophy teaches, in regard to the cauſes of the difference of colours.

Let us now paſs from Phlebotomy to the other leg of phyſick (to make uſe of *Galen*'s metaphor) and that is purging. All phyſicians unanimouſly acknowledge, in catharticks, more or leſs of a deletery, or malign quality, whereby they always have ſomething hurtful in them. Whether or no they are of ſervice in ſuch and ſuch diſtempers, and in ſuch and ſuch ſtages of them, is a queſtion: So that the danger is certain, and the benefit doubtful.

Thoſe that are friends to taking Phyſick, are in the belief that purgative medicines only throw out of the body vicious humours; an error wherein I my ſelf was ſometime involv'd, and from which my own experience undeceiv'd me, no leſs than ſeveral good authors, that I have ſince read.

[h] *Inſtit. Medic.* cap. 4.

It is certain however, that they indiſcriminately ſeparate what is uſeful with what is not ſo, and colliquate, infect and precipitate promiſcuouſly with the excrementitious humours the nutritious juice it ſelf.

It likewiſe ought to be obſerv'd, that every thing that is not fit for nouriſhment, and therefore is term'd excrementitious, is not to be conſider'd as uſeleſs in the body; for a great part thereof has its peculiar office, and nature makes uſe of it for ſome good purpoſe: As, the gall or bilious humour, which ſerves to promote fermentation, and to precipitate or carry forward the groſſer dregs; and the acid humour of the ſtomach, to excite the appetite; and therefore purgative medicines many ways do miſchief: *Firſt*, With the ill impreſſion of their deletery or venemous quality; then by violently forcing out of the body great part of the nutritious juice. Again, by evacuating that which, although not fit for nouriſhment, is neceſſary nevertheleſs for certain natural functions; whereto may be added, the inconvenience of conducting part of the excrements through channels or ways that nature never deſign'd for their expulſion; which, very probably, cannot be done without ſome detriment to thoſe ways: For if the ſharp humours are violently hurry'd on through narrow paſſages, whoſe pores are not accommodated to the particles of thoſe humours, they cannot avoid making ſome havock amongſt the fibres.

The diviſion of catharticks into ſeveral claſſes, according to the effect they have on the particular humours to which they are appropriated; ſo that ſome purge choler, others phlegm, others melancholly; although a notion of long ſtanding, is altogether imaginary, in the judgment of very grave authors; who aſſure us, that there is no purging medicine that does not evacuate indifferently all kinds

of

of humours that come within the ſphere of its activity, that is to ſay, at a diſtance where it can operate; and that the various colour of the excrements, according to the variety of the purgative medicines (which is what has occaſion'd the miſtake in this matter) proceeds from the tincture which is given by the medicine it ſelf to the humour. What I can be very ſure of is, That if a man, of the ſoundeſt health and compoſedneſs, ſhould take two or three doſes of Epithimum (which is looked upon as a purger of melancholly, from the blackneſs of the dregs it ſegregates) he will always throw off black humours, or of a blackiſh hue; this I know with the greateſt certainty. And it is impoſſible to find ſuch a quantity of melancholly humour, I do not ſay in one ſound body only, but even in half a dozen hypocondriacks; it being moreover the humour that leaſt of any abounds in our bodies.

It will, perhaps, be ſaid, That notwithſtanding the known hurt of purgative medicines, and that they do expel the uſeful with the vicious, they may yet be very proper, when it happens that nature would receive more damage from the retention of the vicious humour than from the expulſion of the uſeful.

This is all that can be urged in favour of catharticks: Whereto I anſwer, *Firſt*, That the phyſician ought to aſſure himſelf well, that things are in ſuch a poſture; for ſhould it be otherwiſe, he will do juſt as the *Ottomans* did at the ſiege of *Rhodes*; ſome of whoſe troops being engaged in the aſſault, and at laſt confuſedly mingled with the *Chriſtians* belonging to the garriſon, the *Turks* from the camp, with a barbarous fury, levelled their artillery at both one and the other, and made an equal ſlaughter amongſt their own troops and the enemies.

But when does it happen that the phyſician can have this ſecurity? In common diſeaſes very ſeldom,

or I don't know if at all. Is it not a doubt amongst those of the profession whether in the beginning of fevers one can or ought to purge? The famous aphorism of *Hippocrates*, *concocta medicari oportet* [k], forbids it, unless in case of a *turgescentia humorum*; and orders to wait till the matter is concocted before it's purged off. But this is of a stamp with the axiom mention'd before; for when the matter is concocted, nature of its own accord segregates it, as we see by daily experience; so that then there is no need of purging: And to administer it at such a time, would be the same as to repair to the allies with the auxiliary troops, when the enemy is already flying and vanquish'd. Reason and experience have firmly persuaded me that nature never fails to perfect this work, except, in some rare disorder, she is detain'd by some extraordinary reverse. It is said that a relapse is to be fear'd, if the patient is not purged after the matter is concocted. But (besides, that this is not curing the present distemper, but guarding against a future) I ask from whence does the physician know that the relapses that happen, are deriv'd from the want of purging at such a season? some relapse that have been purg'd, and others again that have omitted it: For which reason I suspect that the relapse does not proceed from thence, but from some portion of the morbifick matter, not only unconcocted, but which had never put it self in motion towards concoction during the whole time of the foregoing distemper; and afterwards, when it stirs to that intent, the patient becomes in so much the greater danger by how much his strength has been impared by the first shock. If this is not certain, it is at least doubtful; and the doubt is enough to

[k] *Hippoc. Aphor.* sect. 1. num. 22. Πέπονα φαρμακοῦν καὶ κινέειν, μὴ ὠμὰ, μηδὲ ἐν ἀρχῇσιν, ἢν μὴ ὀργᾶ; τὰ δὲ πλεῖστα οὐκ ὀργᾶ.

take

take away the ſecurity from the phyſician, that purging is neceſſary at ſuch a time.

Let us now proceed to the *Turgeſcentia humorum*, wherein purging is look'd upon to be indiſpenſably neceſſary in the beginning of the diſtemper: Even in this caſe the very learned *Martinez* has render'd the neceſſity of purging doubtful; for the *turgeſcence* being a quick, violent and unruly motion of the humour, which ſeems to threaten to throw it ſelf upon ſome principal part, and therefore requires the expulſion of ſome portion of it at leaſt, at all events: This kind of motion is experienced in the beginning of the ſmall pox; but for all that, the beſt practitioners do not purge at that time: So that, at this rate, the uſe of purgative medicines is, in all reſpects, full of doubts and dangers.

In ſhort, I muſt further take notice, That though the dangers purgative medicines threaten us withal were out of the queſtion, they have not the efficacy that's attributed to them to exterminate the morbifick matter out of the body. On a time when I had more faith in them than I have at preſent, I us'd them for certain indiſpoſitions, that from time to time I was, and even to this day am ſubject to; whoſe ordinary ſymptoms are a heavineſs of the limbs, a decay of appetite, and ſomewhat of an oppreſſion on the faculties of the ſoul, and uſed to laſt two months, ſometimes more, ſometimes leſs. I perſwaded my ſelf, the phyſicians agreeing therein, that all this proceeded from a ſurcharge of excrementitious humours, and conſequently that the remedy muſt conſiſt in purging: But I proteſt, although, for the ſpace of ſeven years, whenever thoſe indiſpoſitions came upon me, I had recourſe to purgative medicines of almoſt all kinds, at diſtinct periods, varying, as well the ſpecies as the quantity, many ways: And the ſame I may ſay in regard to Regimen, I never experienced any relief

from

from them. But there is more yet remains, and that is, that commonly all this evil apparatus terminated in the breaking out of a few pimples; ſometimes in one, ſometimes in another part of the body. Ruminating upon this repeated experience, I fell into the thought, that moſt of our illneſſes proceed from ſome exceedingly ſmall portion of matter like a ferment of a malignant nature, which being deeply intrench'd in ſome remote part of the body, or for ſome other reaſon that I do not comprehend, is not ſubject to the active quality of purgative medicines, but to nature it ſelf only, who has her eſtabliſh'd periods to bring about its expulſion, and not all the ſpurs of the apothecaries ſhop can quicken its courſe: And when the proper time is come, ſhe diſlodges that gigantick enemy in ſtrength, though a meer dwarf in ſtature, turning it out in a little puſtule, or a few pimples. I was ſome years in this way of thinking, but yet with a diffidence that naturally aroſe from my ſmall knowledge in Phyſick; till reading one time in *Etmuller*, I had the ſatisfaction to find my thoughts very exactly patroniſed by this great author, although *en paſſant*. After treating [1] of the vaſt havock that purgative medicines make in the ſtomach, accuſing them likewiſe of inſufficiency, he ſays thus: *Sanè fermenta morboſa minima illa non attingunt. Hinc ſubinde poſt repetitum licèt purgantium uſum, nihilominus morbi contumaces perſiſtunt.* So that we come to the ſame point, *viz.* that purgative medicines, beſides the many miſchiefs they occaſion, in reſpect to the morbifick matter, they only bruſh over the branches; excepting only when ſuch matter happens to be in the *primæ viæ*; for in that caſe their uſefulneſs is indubitable: But the doubt very often conſiſts in the caſe it ſelf; for, amongſt phyſicians,

[1] *Inſtit. Medic.* part III. cap. 5.

it is frequently diſputed whether the malignity lies in the firſt paſſages or not.

In regard to the choice of purgative medicines, every phyſician has his fancy, and there is ſcarce a purge that has not its particular favourers: Commonly thoſe are preferred that evacuate quietly, and without moving vellications in the inteſtines. I confeſs, that in this point I am a little jealous that the choice is erroneous; becauſe it may be that thoſe vellications do not immediately proceed from the medicine, but from the acrid humour that is ſet in motion by it: And if it be ſo, thoſe purges that diſturb the bowels, ought to be preferr'd; becauſe it is they that expel the ſharpeſt humours, and abandon the hypocritical ſoftneſs of ſuch as evacuate quietly; for it may be, that theſe, by their occult malignity, colliquate a greater portion of the nutritious juice, the ſmoothneſs whereof blunts, or rather ſheaths the acrimony of the excrementitious humours that they come away without pain. If purging medicines were elective, it might be ſuppoſed that theſe pacifick ones only evacuate the ſoft and innocent humours, which, by reaſon of their mild diſpoſition, do not excite a tumult in the parts through which they paſs. This is only a thought of my own, which I docibly ſubmit to the examination of any learned man of the profeſſion, as I do any thing elſe wherein I am not patroniz'd by ſome author of rank.

After catharticks, it is natural to mention ſomething of their comrades and ſubſtitutes, the glyſters; whereof the phyſicians make uſe (as often as the nature of a diſeaſe will not admit of the operation of a purge at the ſtomach) to relax the bowels when it happens that they are not ſo of themſelves, under a ſuppoſition that the uſe of ſoft glyſters are never dangerous: But the ſuppoſition is not ſo certain; for the famous *Sydenham* prohibits the uſe of them

very ſtrongly, as well as of all other evacuations, in all ſuch fevers where the fermentative motion is any thing remiſs, becauſe they make it more ſlow: And not only in this caſe, but generally, and without exception, in all kinds of fevers, in the time of their declenſion, he condemns them in ſuch a degree, that he ſays, for his part, during the declenſion of a fever, he made it his ſtudy to keep the body of the patient coſtive: *Atque mox ad alvum adſtringendum memet accingo.* And the profeſſors well know, that in regard to the manner of managing fever patients, *Sydenham*, by himſelf alone, makes an opinion probable. Let any one therefore, that has an inclination to defend the coherence and ſecurity of phyſical precepts, reconcile theſe meaſures if he can.

In ſhort, there is nothing ſecure in Phyſick. This phyſician deteſts a remedy that another adores. What ill qualities do not ſome, and what virtues others aſcribe to Hellebore? the ſame of Antimony. Precious ſtones, which conſtitute the principal fund of the apothecaries, are now rejected, not only as of no uſe, but even as hurtful by excellent authors. And I believe, for my part, the moſt trifling herb that grows in the fields, is of more real ſervice in medicine, than all the emeralds that come from the Eaſt put together. What ſhall we ſay to ſo many cordials, which are no otherwiſe ſo than in name. Gold chears the heart, while a man has it in his pocket, but not ſwallow'd into the ſtomach: And, indeed, how ſhould the natural heat of a man's body extract any thing from it, when the moſt active fire cannot alter it little or much? The virtue of the Bezoar ſtone, which enters into almoſt all the cardiac preparations, is a meer fable, if we believe (as they ſeem worthy of credit) *Nicholas Bocangelino*, phyſician to the emperor *Charles* the Vth, and *Geronimo Rubeo*, phyſician to *Clement* the VIIIth; who

who having oftentimes made trials of exceeding fine Bezoars, which were in the poſſeſſion of Princes and Noblemen, never experienced any virtue in them. And a great many others are of the ſame opinion.

Coſtly and ſcarce remedies are agreeable to many phyſicians, and to all the apothecaries; and ſome of them have hardly left any thing more to preſcribe, as *Pliny* ſaid, unleſs it be the aſhes of the Phœnix: *Petitis etiam ex nido phœnicis cinereque medicinis.* The ſame may be ſaid in regard to exotick remedies, and ſuch as are brought from diſtant countries. The phyſician finds his account in them for the oſtentation of his art, and the druggiſts and apothecaries find theirs, for the augmentation of their fortunes; but as the ſame *Pliny* takes notice in another part; and experience it ſelf teaches us, cheap and houſhold remedies are much more ſerviceable and ſecure: *Ulceri parvo medicina a rubro mari imputatur; cum remedia vera pauperimus quiſque cænet.*

Monſieur *Duncan*, a doctor of *Montpellier*, relates of another famous *French* phyſician, that he preſcribed Coffee univerſally to all his patients: And yet the generality are now perſuaded that there is not much benefit to be expected from either Tea or Coffee; even the ſpecificks, moſt notorious, are not exempt from being queſtioned. The Jeſuits Bark, it's well known, has a great many enemies; and what is more than all, *Fernelius* exclaim'd againſt Mercury, though againſt all manner of reaſon; when all the world experiences the ſingular efficacy of this moſt generous remedy.

To this inconſtancy of Phyſick, through the oppoſition of opinions, may be added the alteration it receives from the faſhion; which does not exerciſe its ſovereignty leſs, over the art of curing diſtempers, than the manner of dreſs. By the ſame ſteps that ſome medicines go advancing their

credit, others go looſing it: And the ſame happens to Phyſick, with the remedies it propoſes, as did to *Alexander* with the kingdoms he conquer'd; who, as faſt as he puſh'd forward his enterprizes, loſt a great part of what he had once turned his back on. All remedies, in their firſt compoſition, were greatly celebrated: And from thence proceeds thoſe magnificent epithets which were eſtabliſh'd ſeemingly to their renown; ſuch as Aqua Cœleſtis, Tinctura Aurea, and others of the ſame ſtamp; and now a-days neither the Tinctura Aurea, nor the Aqua Cœleſtis, nor the Pillulæ ſine quibus, nor any of the tribe whereto the much renowned Aloes had given eſtimation, dare to whiſper before the *Engliſh* Salts; which, to me, is a remedy to be ſuſpected from the very reaſon before mention'd, of working with ſo much mildneſs: But even to this, and to others that are now reigning, there will ſucceed thoſe that will pull them down from their throne; for ſuch has always been the fate of Phyſick: *Mutatur ars quotidie interpolis, et ingeniorum Græciæ ſtatu impellimur.*

And what ſhall I ſay of the virtues that are falſly aſcrib'd to a great many remedies? The authority of *Valles* is ſufficient for me on this ſcore, who aſſures us that the phyſicians in no one article ſpeak with leſs truth or foundation than in this: *Facilè conceſſerim nulla de re nugari magis medicos quam de medicamentorum viribus* [m].

I ſhall conclude this indeception, in regard to remedies, with the important obſervation, that even though they are of the choiceſt kinds, and well adapted to the purpoſes they are deſign'd, they do miſchief when they are numerous: *Impediunt certè medicamina plura ſalutem.* In this particular the common phyſicians are in an infinite error: *Tyro-*

[m] *Philoſ. Sac.* cap. 75.

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nes mei (*Ballivius* cries out) *quam paucis remediis curantur morbi ! quam plures è vita tollit remediorum farrago ! Sydenham* laments the ſame diſorder, in ſeveral parts of his works, adviſing phyſicians to proceed with more leiſure ſteps in ordering remedies, and to truſt much more to nature ; for it is a great error to imagine that ſhe always ſtands in need of the aſſiſtance of art : *Et ſanè mihi non nunquam ſubiit cogitare nos in morbis depellendis haud ſatis lentè feſtinare, tardius vero nobis eſſe procedendum ; et plus ſæpè numero naturæ eſſe commitendum quam mos hodie obtinuit ; errat namque ſed neque errore erudito, qui naturam artis adminiculo ubique indigere exiſtimat.*

It's true, that in this infamous practice, the phyſician is oftentimes leſs to blame than the patients themſelves ; who are apt to importune him to preſcribe every day and almoſt every hour. This, perhaps, is the greateſt error on the part of the vulgar in the uſe of Phyſick. They take him for the ableſt phyſician, who, without intermiſſion, is heaping medicines upon medicines ; and even when that, by ſuch tyrannical and homicidious procedure the ſick perſon is ſent to his grave, they are ready to ſay, The doctor did all that was in the power of Phyſick to do ; whereas, in effect, he did all that the moſt ſtupid ignorance, or the moſt criminal condeſcenſion was capable of. Theſe very officious phyſicians, who preſcribe as often as the patient requeſts it, (ſays *Leonardo Botalo*, phyſician to *Henry* the IIId of *France*) are, of all others, the moſt pernicious : *Cum officioſiſſimi eſſe volunt, tunc ſunt maximè noxii.*

Thoſe who defend the dogma of critical days, have no other anſwer to the objection that is made to them, that experience does not demonſtrate on their ſide, but often on the contrary, than, That the intemperate uſe of remedies hinders, and ſometimes

precipitates the courſe of nature: But from hence follow two conſequences; the *firſt* is, That all phyſicians err in the abuſe of remedies: For there is not one, if he would ingenuouſly confeſs the truth (as *Lucas Tozzi* aſſures) that obſerves the criſes conſtantly to anſwer the periods aſſigned them. The *ſecond* is, That the phyſician ought to be ſo ſtill, not to diſturb nature in her operation, that he muſt ſcarce order any remedy at all; for there is none but will cauſe an alteration, more or leſs. Doctor *Bois* has already ſaid enough on this point: I don't know whether his rules are to be entirely follow'd or not; I am certain, nevertheleſs, that the multitude of remedies which are order'd by the common phyſicians, cannot do leſs than greatly weaken nature (and this exactly at the juncture wherein ſhe ſtands in need of greater vigour, being in actual ſtruggle with her enemy) and diſturb the work ſhe is engag'd in, of preparing the morbifick matter for ſecretion.

As for ſuch ignorant phyſicians who err in this reſpect, through want of capacity, it would be idle to perſuade them; for folly is always dull and untractable. The ſame may be ſaid, if there ſhould be one or other who, not being ignorant of the danger and inconvenience, does, nevertheleſs, preſcribe a great deal either out of friendſhip to the apothecaries, or, perhaps, becauſe he is likewiſe intereſted in the conſumption of the medicines; for the ſoul of ſuch a one is in a more deplorable ſtate than the health of his ſickeſt patient: And I mention this by way of ſuppoſition; becauſe, to think that phyſicians, in general, are thus iniquitous, is what can only be collected from the inſolent calumny of *Henry Cornelius Agrippa* [n]; though he was himſelf one of the profeſſion. I have rather

[n] *Lib. de Vanit. Scient.*

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obſerv'd the phyſicians, in general, to be men of probity; and what inclines me to think they are ſo, is, that in the apartments of the ſick, eſpecially if they are dangerouſly ill, you ſhall always hear edifying diſcourſes, and ſee examples of Chriſtian piety.

I know there are ſome, and thoſe not a few, who preſcribe more than their reaſon dictates, in order to keep up their credit; becauſe they find they are diſeſteem'd, and ſometimes diſmiſs'd and others call'd in, if they do not every day order ſomething afreſh. I would lay before theſe the indiſpenſable obligation which they have in conſcience not to paſs on any conſideration whatſoever, either for profit or honour, the boundary that their knowledge points out to them; it being certain that neither the riſque of being leſs call'd for to patients, nor of being cry'd down by the apothecaries, nor of being taken for *ignoramus's* by ſilly people that know no better, will excuſe them from being guilty in the eyes of God, of whatever miſchief befals the ſick perſon, owing to their exceſs of preſcription.

Many phyſicians take a middle way, which is, to preſcribe out of complaiſance; that is, to order ſome trifling things, which, although of no ſervice, they likewiſe apprehend no danger from; that is to ſay, ſomething that will do neither good nor harm. But if what they order comes within the claſſis of medicines, it will, in ſome reſpect, be an alterative; and conſequently if it does no good, it muſt unavoidably do harm, more or leſs. Beſides, the phyſician has no right to make the patients ſpend their ſubſtance in what he believes will do them no good, and in ſuch caſe, doubtleſs, is bound to make reſtitution; nor will it avail him to ſay, That the patients would have it ſo: For, moſt certainly, none would willingly lay out their money in what

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the phyſician knows will be of no ſervice to them: And if he is faithful in diſcovering to them the uſeleſſneſs of the medicine, he may be aſſured they will not give a farthing for it.

After I have exhibited ſo many articles which concur to render the uncertainty of Phyſick paſt all doubt, I am aware that ſome people will ſay; What then is the reſult of the experience and obſervation of ſo many ages, that they have not diſcover'd what does harm and what does good? But to this I have already given an anſwer in what I have taken notice of above, the fallibility of experience: Whereto I add, that the obſervations which are found collected in ſome authors, are ſo far from giving any light, that they only ſerve to puzzle the cauſe; being ſo defective, that they do not deſerve even the name of obſervations: *Firſt*, Becauſe many of them are founded upon one experiment only, which infinite ways is liable to fallacy: Another time, becauſe the inſincerity of the phyſician oſtentatiouſly quotes one caſe where the remedy had a good effect, and conceals two or three where it prov'd ill: Then, becauſe the circumſtances are not exactly remark'd, there being very many that may concur ſo as that, in the ſame ſpecies of diſtemper, the ſame remedy may, at one time do good and another time harm. Again, becauſe, in the caſe the obſervation relates to, different and inconnex'd medicines may have been apply'd, and it is not eaſy to know to which the cure is owing; though the phyſician will attribute it to that of his own invention, or to that which is moſt in his favour; and if more phyſicians than one are ſucceſſively called in, each of them will attribute the recovery to what he preſcrib'd, although the recovery was not obtain'd till a good while after, which may very well happen; by reaſon that moſt of the diſtempers, the cures whereof are propounded in the

obſervations, are curable by nature her ſelf alone, and, in fact, are ſuch, that one daily ſees people do well of, without any remedy at all ; and therefore the phyſician cannot know whether the recovery is owing to him or to nature.

Every body have their eyes upon the obſervations of *Riberio*, which are what do not meet with a ſmall ſhare of applauſe, and though their number ariſes to four hundred, there is ſcarcely one to be found amongſt them that is not defective in ſome or other of the before-mention'd articles. It's ridiculous enough to find this author bragging that he cur'd a bileous cholick [o] with four bleedings and as many purges, interlarded with glyſters, emollients, anodynes and other remedies ; in which, of neceſſity, many days muſt have been conſum'd: When, for the generality, this diſorder terminates in much leſs time, if left to nature alone, or manag'd with a great deal leſs doctoring. It's very probable, that in the caſe before us, the patient would have recover'd ſooner if the atrocity of the phyſician had not ſo much impair'd his ſtrength. How often, when he has promiſcuouſly apply'd various remedies, does he attribute the victory, only becauſe he pleaſes, to his *Aqua Theriaca*, or to ſome other *Noſtrum* of his own ? It's a vaſt deal that might be ſaid of the uſeleſſneſs of theſe obſervations, which are really ſo no otherwiſe than in name: It requires great knowledge, perſpicuity and ſincerity to make uſeful obſervations ; and theſe are endowments not to be met with every day in one and the ſame perſon. It's true, that amongſt the modern authors, ſome have labour'd in this matter with a great deal more care and diſcretion than the ancients ; and if the reſt that ſucceed would likewiſe imitate them, Phyſick might hope for many im-

[o] *Cent. 4. Obſerv. 75.*

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provements in points wherein, at preſent, it is very imperfect.

I do not know if this diſcovery of *The Uncertainty of Phyſick*, wherewith I preſent the publick, will be very grateful to the phyſicians: By what I can judge, I may aſſure my ſelf of incurring the diſpleaſure of ſome; taking it for granted, that all thoſe who are not overburden'd with ſtudy, and a yet more circumſcrib'd underſtanding will declare againſt me; becauſe theſe people imagine they have a treaſure of infallible doctrine in whatever author they have profeſſed obedience to. Add to this the apprehenſion, that if the town ſhould come into the taſte of ſaving the expence of Phyſick, it might likewiſe ſave the expence of phyſicians; and in ſuch caſe ſome of them would be caſhier'd. But in this point they may live without any care; for the world will always be the ſame it has been; nor is there any engineer capable of turning the courſe of thoſe impetuous torrents, prepoſſeſſion and univerſal cuſtom. How did *Quevedo* in *Spain*, *Petrarc* in *Italy*, *Montagne* firſt, and then *Moliere* in *France*, declaim again phyſicians and phyſick, far beyond truth, the boundary of juſtice! their writings are read and celebrated; but things remain juſt as they were: For my part, I would content my ſelf with perſuading ſome few, that they are putting an end to their lives, by thoſe very means they are intent after for the re-eſtabliſhing their health.

Amongſt the diſcreet and learned phyſicians there will be variety of ſentiments in regard to my performance: For ſome are poſſeſſed of ſuch a generous candor, that they themſelves openly promulge the inſufficiency of Phyſick, and their own perplexity in the ſtudy and practice of it: But to others again, who are not endow'd with ſo noble a diſpoſition, it is not diſagreeable to ſee that there is a much greater confidence put in Phyſick than there

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ought to be; and as the eſtimation of the art it ſelf reflects the ſame upon the profeſſors of it, thoſe who litigate the profeſſion will not be over complaiſant to them. Perhaps this was the motive that embru'd ſo many pens againſt doctor *Bois*; whoſe ſincerity and zeal for the publick good deſerv'd a different treatment.

And that ſome phyſicians, out of pure policy, conceal what they think of the inſincerity of their art, is plain, by experience. *Baglivius*, who very largely bemoans the unhappy ſtate wherein Phyſick lies obſcur'd, does, nevertheleſs, more than once, ſhew his reſentment of ſome authors who diſclos'd this defect to the world, taxing them with imprudence, in that, by ſuch diſcovery, they leſſen'd the authority of its profeſſors. *Gaſpar de los Reyes*, in his *Elyſian* fields, *Quæſt.* 20. carries the dangers of his profeſſion to ſo great a height, that he does not meet with any caſe wherein the phyſician acts with certainty of his being right: His words, ſpeaking of himſelf, and the reſt, are theſe; *Quis enim eſt, qui ſemel non erret? aut quis qui ſemel tantum erret? dubito an ſemper non erremos*; which is more than I have advanc'd. In another part he declares that the phyſicians, of the greateſt knowledge, frequently miſtake the cures: *Perfectiſſimi ſæpe medici in varios rapiuntur errores.* And, notwithſtanding, this imprejudic'd phyſician was not an undeceiver of others in an equal degree: For, after obſerving, that to the diſcreet and learned, a phyſician may confeſs his errors, becauſe ſuch are aware of the thick obſcurity, and inſuperable difficulty of the art: He adds, that they ought to be conceal'd from the ignorant and rude vulgar, who contemplate in a phyſician a much more extenſive knowledge than he either is or can be maſter of: *Cæterum apud rude, & indoctum vulgus, & quod in medico plus credit quam habet aut habere poteſt, ſi quando errare contingat, ego tacere potius*

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duxerim, quam peccatum fateri. Concluding with the reaſon, that ſuch a confeſſion of ones own errors can be of no ſervice to either phyſician or patient: *Præſertim cum ex tali confeſſione nihil utilitatis ægro, aut medico accedere poſſit.*

But, on the contrary, I find a great benefit to the ſick, and no ſmall one to the phyſician, in this diſcovery. To the ſick; becauſe being thoroughly appriz'd of the little ſecurity there is in Phyſick, whereto there is ſcarce a remedy belonging that is wholly void of danger: That the phyſicians, of the greateſt repute for knowledge, commit various miſtakes; that many times, when they recover from their indiſpoſitions, they owe their recovery wholly to nature, and to the phyſician nothing more than the ill office of having retarded it, with other things of this tenor: They will proceed more deliberately in putting themſelves under the doctor or apothecary's hands; whereby they will preſerve their ſtrength more entire: They will not ſpend uſeleſly, and oftentimes with apparent hurt in apothecary's ſhops, that money which they ſtand in need of for other uſes: They will leave to nature thoſe little ailments of ſmall moment, which ſhe heals of her ſelf; and, wherein, granting that Phyſick may do ſome good, it does more hurt another way: They will content themſelves with a regimen regulating their method of living, and, at moſt, take now and then ſome very light thing for ſuch habitual indiſpoſitions as they may have brought into the world with them, knowing that as ſuch are inſeparable from their temperature, it is not in the power of any phyſician upon earth to erradicate, let them talk as much as they will of radical cures, there being no ſuch thing *in rerum natura.* By this diſcovery a great many delicate ladies will deſiſt from being troubleſome to their huſbands and families; a great many men will be of ſervice to ſociety, who now make themſelves

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uſeleſs, by being at every turn's end taking of Phyſick. Theſe, and many other advantages, which will accrue from the knowledge of the little that's to be hop'd for from the art of Phyſick, induc'd me to give the publick this hint, and the phyſicians ought, in conſcience, as I ſaid before, to concur on their parts to the indeception.

To the phyſicians themſelves it muſt be of ſervice, at leaſt to the learned ones, and thoſe reputed as ſuch: For theſe will never want ſalaries and employment: Suppoſing that the time will hardly ever happen (nor is it reaſonable it ſhould) that all the phyſicians be baniſh'd out of the world, as it's ſaid they were once out of *Rome*: And, on the other hand, they will not be haraſs'd to no purpoſe, by ſick people, where there is no neceſſity, nor yet by impertinent and ridiculous ones that are well. They will not, at every inſtant, be ſent for to the vapouriſh fantaſtique, who would willingly have the doctor feeling her pulſe every hour; nor to the maniack by nature, the imaginary brainſick, who like him, in *Moliere*'s comedy, is continually making an outcry when nothing ails him: Nor to the decrepit dotard, who judges that the drugs of an apothecary's ſhop are able to remove him a great many miles from the grave. By this means they will have more time for ſtudy, and to aſſimilate their ſtudy with their experience, as likewiſe to attend at anatomical diſſections: The moſt eminent amongſt them will be at leiſure to write books; and in this manner the phyſicians will become more learned, and the art of Phyſick will every day be making ſome advances towards as great a degree of perfection as it is capable of.

I have no enmity with the art of Phyſick, to the contrary, I mightily eſteem it. I know that the

Holy Ghoſt recommends it; [p] tho' ſome body or other may retort that the Phyſick, recommended in ſcripture, is not the ſame that's in practice at this time. It's certain there are diſtempers that nature cannot overcome by her ſelf, but yet gets the better of them by the aſſiſtance of Phyſick, as experience ſhews in the venereal diſeaſe. I am ready to own, that in diſeaſes of manifeſt danger, it is the part of prudence to recur to its aſſiſtance; and, that many times, the ſudden promptitude, in the ſalutary effect, ſhews that it was owing to the remedy having been adminiſter'd at a proper juncture: For nature of her ſelf is not us'd to ſuch ſudden changes: That opium, the bark, emeticks, and ſeveral other medicaments, of manifeſt activity, have done wonders: I am only diſpleas'd that the engagements of the phyſicians ſhould be extended beyond the reach of their knowledge and power, and that all the while they are groping after ſhadows, they would fain ſeem to be crown'd with rays.

If I ſhould, perhaps, be thought, in ſome expreſſion or other, to have repreſented the dangers of phyſical curations ſomewhat more bulky than is conſiſtent with reaſon, it may not yet be inconſiſtent with prudence to have done ſo, and the like practice has very great examples to patronize it: For as the vulgar are ſo bent towards the extreme of yielding a blind aſſent to all the precepts of the moſt ignorant

[p] Our author here alludes to *Eccleſiaſticus* xxxviii. This book, with us, is accounted apochryphal, and therefore, I preſume, our phyſicians (even thoſe of them that pay ſome regard to other parts of ſcripture) will not value themſelves greatly on this recommendation: Or if they ſhould, the 15th verſe of the ſame chapter may ſerve to illuſtrate our author's diſcourſe: Since the ſon of *Sirach* ſeems, thereby, to think that there needs no greater temporal puniſhment for one that ſinneth before his maker than to fall into the hands of the phyſician.

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practitioner; it's neceſſary to incline them ſomewhat towards the oppoſite extreme, that they may remain in a due rectitude. And as I have, throughout this diſcourſe, ſpoken under the patronage of illuſtrious phyſical authors, ſo what I have only hinted from my own experience and obſervation, I propoſe not as a rule, but as a doubt; if any one ſhould be pleas'd to contradict me, he will give me an opportunity of adding, in a ſeparate treatiſe, a great deal that I have omitted on this ſubject, to avoid running this eſſay to too great a length.

And, I conclude, with this exhortation to all, that in the choice of a phyſician, they would have a regard to the following circumſtances.

The firſt. That he be a good chriſtian: For by calling to mind the ſtrict account that he muſt give to God of his neglects, he will attend more ſeriouſly to a compliance with his duty, and apply himſelf with greater aſſiduity to the ſtudy of his faculty.

The ſecond. That he be judicious, and not of too fiery a diſpoſition: For even in the moſt diſcreet, the fire of the natural temper is apt to fill their reaſon with ſmoke.

The third. That he be no boaſter in extolling the power and ſecurity of his art: For as it is certain there is no ſecurity in it, it's as ſure that he that pretends to it is either very ignorant, or a very great deceiver.

The fourth. That he be not enamour'd of any philoſophical ſyſtem, ſo as to regulate his practice by it: For ſuch a one is beyond compariſon, more expos'd to err, than he that governs himſelf by his own and the experience of the beſt practical authors.

The fifth. That he be no heaper of remedies, eſpecially capital ones, except in caſe of a moſt preſſing urgency, that will grant no truce: Holding, as a certainty, that every phyſician that orders and pre-

preſcribes a great deal is a very bad one, even tho' he ſhould know by heart all that ever has been wrote on the ſubject of Phyſick.

The ſixth. That he obſerve and inform himſelf exactly of the ſigns of the diſtemper, which are many, and taken from very various ſprings. The common phyſicians, in feeling the pulſe, and looking at the urine, and that very ſlightly, at once take the pen and fall to preſcribing. The pulſe is a ſign that's very obſcure, and the urine very fallible; nor is it poſſible to form any thing like a ſure conception of a diſtemper, and its cauſes (except now and then that it happens to be very apparent) without attending to the completion of a great many circumſtances, both concomitant and antecedent. By the phyſicians not reſting more on this point, are occaſion'd ſuch grievous miſtakes in the diſtinguiſhing of diſtempers. How often has a pleuriſie been taken for a flatus, and vice verſa?

The ſeventh. That the events correſpond for the generality with his prognoſticks. I ſay for the generality, becauſe to be always right in this matter, is not the property of man, but of angels. With this remark almoſt all the foregoing might be excus'd, for by this alone the moſt rude and illiterate might know which phyſician is learned, and which is ignorant. He that prognoſticates right, it's certain that he knows the preſent ſtate of the diſtemper: For only by what is at preſent can be known what ſhall happen afterwards. On the contrary, he that commonly errs in his prognoſticks, it's ſure that he knows nothing of phyſick: In the ſame manner as if an almanack-maker ſhould miſtake the times of the lunar changes and the eclipſes, nobody would doubt that he was entirely ignorant of aſtronomy.

There are ſome who conſider the art of prognoſticating as a ſeparate faculty from that of curation; and

and thus they are wont to celebrate one phyſician for his prognoſtications, and another for his cures. This is a notable error: For from what we have already ſaid, it is impoſſible he that is wrong in his prognoſticks ſhould be right in the method of cure. The error ariſes from his not having form'd a right judgment of the diſtemper: And having miſtook the conception of the diſeaſe, how ſhould he ſucceed in the cure, unleſs by meer caſualty? And ſuppoſing it were poſſible that he that prognoſticates well ſhould cure ill, and he that prognoſticates ill ſhould cure well; the former is more to be eſteem'd than the latter. The reaſon is ſtrong and cogent: For in miſtaking the cure, there is only riſqu'd the temporal health of the body: In miſtaking the prognoſticks, the eternal ſalvation of the ſoul is oftentimes at ſtake. In a malignant and treacherous diſeaſe, ſays the ignorant phyſician, 'tis nothing at all, or at moſt only a ſlight crudity of the ſtomach, that by taking a little draught and a julap, will be gone by to-morrow. By this means the ſick perſon and thoſe that attend him are eaſy, and negligent in making thoſe chriſtian preparations wherewith he ought to expect death; in the mean time a ſudden delirium ſeizes on his reaſon, and the patient dies not only in the ſame manner as a *Pagan*, but even as a brute. Good God! and how often does this happen by the practice of Phyſick being permitted to ſo many ignorant pretenders! the greateſt, or the only crime, that is uſually attributed to unſkilful phyſicians, is their being homicides of the body: But this is not the greateſt, for they are ſometimes guilty of the eternal death of the ſoul.

Others, more cautious or more deceitful, by an artifice to catch the vulgar, follow the oppoſite road. Whenever ſuch a one finds a patient with any thing of a feveriſh diſorder, ſays he, the diſtemper runs very high, he's in a dangerous way: He wrinkles his

his forehead, ſtretches his eyebrows, and ſhrugs up his ſhoulders, gives various orders, puts all the people of the houſe in a fright, at laſt, tells them, he will viſit the patient as often as poſſible, and do all for him that his art is capable of. Having taken this precaution, what of courſe follows is, that if the patient dies, the comprehenſion of the phyſician is cry'd up to the ſkies, who from the very firſt viſit penetrated the hidden malignity of the diſeaſe. If he recovers, the cure is aggrandiz'd, and a thouſand thanks are given to God, that the patient has fallen into the hands of ſuch a phyſician ſo very ſkilful, as to be able to overpower the ſtrength of ſuch a gigantick ilneſs.

Through the fault of ſuch phyſicians the ſick are not likely to die without the ſacraments: But what ſometimes happens is, that they die without having had illneſs enough, at firſt, to occaſion it: For wherever theſe ſuggeſtious happen to light on a puſillanimous perſon, he grows ſad, diſquieted, and diſpirited, ſo that the diſorder, which was ſlight, becomes of a dangerous nature. Both are bad enough, tho' the former is the worſt. Gentlemen phyſicians (I ſpeak to thoſe who either, with a very incompetent ſtudy, apply themſelves to this vocation, or graſp more patients than they can attend in the manner they ought) call to mind that one day the guardian angels, to whom were committed the keeping of your patients, will accuſe you before God, and bring to your remembrance, as well thoſe whoſe deaths have been accelerated by your faults, as thoſe (oh! what a terrible circumſtance) that have been condemn'd through your ignorance.

FINIS.